

RED MULBERRY

Morus rubra L.

plant symbol = MORU2

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Uses

Ethnobotanic: Red mulberry was used by several Native American tribes to treat a variety of ailments. The sap was used to treat ringworm (Foster and Duke 2000). The Cherokee made a tea from the leaves of the plant for treatment of dysentery, weakness, and difficulty urinating (Hamel and Chiltoskey 1975). The Comanche used the fruit of the red mulberry as a food source (Carlson and Jones 1940, Moerman 1998).

Status

Please consult the PLANTS Web site and your State Department of Natural Resources for this plant's current status (e.g. threatened or endangered species, state noxious status, and wetland indicator values).

Description

General: Mulberry Family (Moraceae). Red mulberry is a tree that can reach 20 m in height and 45 cm in diameter. Red mulberry has a short trunk and stout, spreading branches that form a round-topped crown. The bark can be smooth or scaly and is dark brown in color. The branchlets are covered with short hairs. The

leaves are simple, alternate, and up to 2 dm long. The leaves are broad, egg-shaped, and lobed. The base of the leaf is square, as if it has been cut off abruptly. The tip of the leaf is pointed. The leaves have sharply serrated margins. The upper leaf surface is rough to the touch. The lower surface is soft and covered with short hairs. The petioles are 2 to 3 cm long and produce a milky fluid when broken. The catkins that bear stamens are 2 to 5 cm long. The catkins that bear pistils are 2 to 2.5 cm long. Red mulberry has aggregate fruits that are 2 to 3 cm long. The fruits are juicy and have a dark purple color.

Distribution: For current distribution, please consult the Plant Profile page for this species on the PLANTS Web site.

Habitat: Red mulberry is found in floodplains, river valleys, and moist hillsides.

Adaptation

Red mulberry is fire intolerant. However, it colonizes post-fire sites when sufficient moisture is available.

Establishment

Red mulberry seeds can be sown in the fall without stratification or in the spring after 30 to 90 days of storage at temperatures between 33 to 41 °F in moist sand. Red mulberry can also be artificially propagated from stem cuttings. Red mulberry prefers deep well-drained soil that is high in organic matter.

Pests and Potential Problems

Grown in its native habitat and using local seed stock, red mulberry should not be prone to debilitating pests.

Cultivars, Improved, and Selected Materials (and area of origin)

These materials are readily available from commercial plant sources.

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